

MISSING & MURDERED PERSON



- Minnesota

BCA

Bureau of Criminal Apprehension

**BRANDON'S LAW
MINNESOTA MISSING PERSONS' ACT
299C.51-299C.5655**



MISSING PERSON POLICY

- Important to have policies and procedures in place on how your agency will respond to missing person cases
 - Abductions/AMBER Alert
 - Children missing from care
 - Lost, Injured, or Otherwise Missing
 - Runaways/Throw-aways
 - Special Needs Children
 - Individuals with Alzheimer's/Dementia
 - Endangered adults
- Call taker/911
- Patrol/first responder
- Investigations



IF ENDANGERED, IMMEDIATELY CONSULT BCA

- EVEN IF YOU DON'T NEED HELP
- BCA has additional Tools and resources that may help.
 - Analytical support
 - Experienced investigators familiar with missing persons homicide investigations
 - Technology / equipment to aid in locating missing persons.
 - Investigative contacts throughout the state of Minnesota.
 - Missing persons clearing house



MISSING PERSON CASES

- Mental health
- Chemical use/addiction
- Cognitive disability
- Young age
- Parental abduction
- Abduction
- Homeless/transient
- Sex trafficking
- Domestic Assault/Homicide
- Lost in wilderness



Juvenile Response



INITIAL RESPONSE

- LE needs to attempt to determine whether the child has:
 - wandered off
 - been delayed
 - intentionally run away
 - A victim of an abduction/foul play



CRITICAL STAGE

- The attitude or approach that any agency and its officers take in the initial response may determine whether the child is:
 - Recovered and returned safely home
 - Remains missing for months or years
 - Found dead
 - Never located



GENERAL RULE OF RESPONSE

- Respond to every report of a missing child as if the child is in immediate danger.
- Assessment will need to be made as to the seriousness of the situation and probable danger that the child is in.
- *Assume the child is in danger until the facts contradict that assumption.*



DETERMINING A CHILD AT RISK

- Young age
- Mentally diminished
- Drug dependent (prescription or illicit)
- Risk factors
- With others who could endanger welfare
- Absence inconsistent with established behavior
- Circumstances that would cause a reasonable person to conclude child may be at risk (what if it was your child)
- Family's actions and level of concern



FIRST RESPONDER

- Interview reporting party.
- Confirm the child is in fact missing
- Identify the circumstances
- Determine when, where, and who last had contact with child
- Conduct immediate/thorough search of child's home
 - Even if the child was reported missing from a different location
 - Even if the family says they have already searched
- Remain alert to any unusual circumstance surrounding the child's disappearance that would require immediate action and mobilization of all available resources.
- Obtain social media account info and photo
- **Call the BCA**



BCA ASSISTANCE

- Provide additional resources – personnel
- Identify and coordinate tools and resources
- Missing person alert
- Offline searches
- Cell phone – exigent searches & tracking
- Consent or search warrant help
- Interview
- Crime scene assistance



Adult Response



INITIAL RESPONSE

- Determine if individual is in fact missing
- **Enter in NCIC**
- Identify where they were last seen and by whom – verify
- Is the person in a vehicle/on foot
- Determine recent activity or activity since last contact
 - Social media
 - Bank/EBT/benefits access
- Cell phone
- If family/friends say it is unusual for them not to be in contact – it is
- Search – deceased individuals often located close to where they were last seen
- Call the BCA



BCA ASSISTANCE

- Missing person alerts
 - LE only
 - LE with public categories no media
 - LE with public categories including media
- Offline searches
- Identify/coordinate tools and resources
- Search warrant help
- Cell tracking
- Crime scene assistance
- Additional resources - personnel



MP INV

- Adult female reported missing to PD by her sister who stated that she had not seen or heard from her for a couple of days.
- Out of character: MP is mother who lives with her boyfriend and children.
- MP and boyfriend have current charges pending in a County for domestic abuse incident.
- Boyfriend present with Sister states that last time he saw MP was 4 days prior to meeting with LE. Boyfriend indicates this is when he called 911 to have her removed as there is DANCO in place.



MP

- Boyfriend advised that MP left prior to police arrived and that he received Facebook messages and or text messages from MP who advised that she went to the Cities, found a new guy and was going to get an attorney, etc.
- PD advised BCA of missing persons report
- BCA Agents met with Investigator from PD and get briefed on MP report.
- Reviewed CFS for removal observed call from 612# to 911 .
- Facebook query on 612# matched with FB Profile name(FB)



MP

- Knock and talk at residence.
- Receive similar account from Boyfriend.
- Boyfriend advised that 612# belongs to cousin and that he used that cell phone to call 911 as his other phone was out of minutes.



MP

- Boyfriend advised that Cousin had been to residence and had watched movie with him and MP night before police called.
- Boyfriend consented to search of residence per standard protocol during MP investigations.
- Suspicious paint observed on basement floor.
- Boyfriend consented to cell phone exam.



SUSPICIOUS PAINT ON BASEMENT FLOOR





INVESTIGATION CONTINUED...

- MP cell records received showing cell phone travelled to Metro area.
- Cell phone presently showing no activity.
- Facebook for MP shows no recent activity.
- PD police report / Gas Drive off related to cousin (Video shows cousin with another male individual)
- Cell records for MP and Cousin requested by BCA.
- Cousin and MP phones traveled to Metro area at same time and mapping in same general area.



MP

- PD and BCA travel to metro area and locate Cousin, Interview him during which Cousin gives inconsistent account of events as described by Boyfriend.
- Agents seized Cousin cell phone obtained warrant to examine.
- Cell phone exam report shows Cousin google search
- Google search for a residence.
- PD and BCA Agents eventually identify a acquaintance of Boyfriend and Cousin as living at residence (google search).



MP

- Investigators become quite concerned that MP is more than just missing as days go by. Boyfriend is interviewed multiple times, provides inconsistent information, fails polygraph etc. and eventually flees the area.
- Cousin retains attorney
- SW's executed at associate residence for computers / cell phones etc. (Associate lost cell phone day before SW)



SEARCH WARRANTS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

- Search Warrants prepared for Google and Facebook for all subjects involved
- Facebook and Google records reviewed, providing additional information that three individuals possibly have knowledge regarding MP disappearance.
- Multiple witnesses interviewed as case progressed.



MP

- Boyfriend returned to area after fleeing area is arrested on outstanding warrant.
- Boyfriend interviewed and eventually confessed to killing MP and disposing of her body with the assistance of associate and Cousin.
- Boyfriend leads PD and BCA to clandestine grave site where MP is recovered.
- Investigation Continues resulting in two additional persons being charged for aiding an offender.



THINGS THAT WORKED WELL

- PD invited BCA to assist with investigation – Very time intensive case and the team approach worked well.
- Review of information leading up to MP report provided info about earlier CFS and identity of co-conspirator.
- Consent search of house / evidence of hasty paint job on floor to cover blood evidence.
- Following up with interviews of all possible witnesses led to identifying other witnesses who had important info.
- Obtaining cell phone records and locations to verify alibis proved helpful as it placed suspect cell phone traveling with victim cell phone.
- Obtaining and reviewing social media, cell phones exams and google records all provided useful information.



TAKE-AWAYS

- Missing persons Investigations can lead anywhere.
- Most often lead outside home jurisdiction where MP is reported.
- Can be complex and require additional resources to obtain cell phone records, cell tracking, interviews etc.



TAKE-AWAYS CONTINUED

- Aggressive response early on proves successful.
- If PC for Assault/Murder, consider SW and /or Crime Scene Team.
- Trust family's instincts if they perceive something is wrong.
- Ask for help if agency lacks resources – and work with neighboring agencies as jurisdictional lines get blurry on MP Cases
- Crime Alert resulted in important leads.
- Agencies worked diligently/ provided resources even though it was not clear where crime had been committed until body recovered.



PROBLEM AREAS

- Mental health facilities, hospitals and shelters reluctant to communicate with LE regarding patients information/location confirmation.
- Delayed reporting to Law Enforcement or no report.
- Training



QUESTIONS



- Minnesota
BCA
Bureau of Criminal Apprehension

CONTACT INFO

SSA Ricky Wuori

Bemidji Regional Office

Ricky.Wuori@state.mn.us

Direct line 218-755-6655

Cell 218-341-7798

ASAIC Don Newhouse

Bemidji Regional Office

don.newhouse@state.mn.us

Direct line 218-755-6652

Cell 218-556-2546

